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PAWNS OF WAR

By Bosworth Crocker

THE LAST STRAW

PAWNS OF WAR

A PLAY

BY

BOSWORTH CROCKER

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Library of Congress

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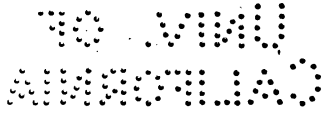

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FOREWORD

THE invasion of neutralised Belgium, according to plan, by the "leader of civilisation," in the face of an aghast world, was surely the masterpiece of cynicism — perhaps the most cynical act and the greatest piece of folly the world has ever seen. Strong language, if the tale of the world's cynicism and folly since the beginning of time be passed in review. Countries little and great have been invaded without cause time and again, treaties torn up, and all manner of bad faith kept. But this is the twentieth century; international arbitration is more than a mere notion; world communications, wireless telegraphy, flying, and other summits of civilisation have been reached. And this act was done, this folly committed, by the State which through a million tongues and pens claimed for itself leadership of the civilised world, and the crown of human intelligence.

Persons possessed by a single idea, even if it be only that of their own importance, are perpetually driven by it to the doing and saying of what lacks perspective and the virtue of proportion. Just proportion is the hallmark of true civilisation, as it is the essential quality of true art. The invasion of neutralized Belgium was an act that could only have been committed by a nation blinded to all sense of proportion by the single idea of its own importance. That

any European people, at this time of day, should thus conceive the notion of being more important than their neighbours would make one smile if it had not made the whole world weep. In our epoch one expects a little more cosmic philosophy than that from a great nation. But countless military and professional minds and millions of their followers had reached a conclusion unbelievably provincial, and proceeded to push that conclusion to ends incredibly dreadful.

The entrance of America into the war is causing Germany to search her heart at last for the reason why she has no friends, and for the way to remedy that state of things. The way is transparently clear: Let her democratise herself, and cease to teach patriotism in her schools. Patriotism should be a free, a spontaneous growth, or it becomes mischievous provincialism. State-taught patriotism has led to that masterpiece of cynicism, or of blindness — call it which you will — that even now staggers the world.

But the folly of the strategy which conceived that masterpiece is only just beginning to be generally realised. The war would have been won by Germany, and all her aims achieved at least two years ago, if only she had not invaded Belgium — *had stood strictly on the defensive against France,* and at once attacked the old, autocratic Russia with all her might. A short war, hegemony in the Balkans, and a clear road for her schemes in Asia Minor — all that was wanted for the moment, all that she had expected to gain without having to fight at all, for she never really believed that Russia would fight — such would have been

the outcome of that "frischer, fröhlicher Krieg." No complications with England, Italy, Japan, America. No loss of her colonies, nor forfeiting of the world's friendship, no great interruption to her commerce, no ruin or starvation for her people. When Prussian militarism is killed at last, the word "Belgium" will be found graven on its heart.

"Pawns of War" is a play woven round this monstrous piece of cynicism and folly. It has a sustained crescendo . . . very gripping and should play extremely well. I congratulate the author on having written a play that is so well worth while, so lifelike and so forceful.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

PAWNS OF WAR

CHARACTERS

DR. ALBERT ESTERLINCK, surgeon and burgomaster of Aerschel
ANGELA, his wife
MARIANNE, their daughter
BERNARD, their son
RITTA, their serving-maid
FATHER ANTOINE, a priest
JEAN GROUX, PIERRE NAVEZ } in the service of the burgomaster
ACKERMANN, an old man
JULES WIRTZ, a crippled Belgian veteran
HIESSLING, a drunkard
GENERAL LUDWIG VON WAHLHAYN of the German army
FALKENHORST, General von Wahlhayn's Chief of Staff
BARNSTORFF, RICHTER } members of General von Wahlhayn's Staff
GERMAN ORDERLIES
BELGIAN CITIZENS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THE FIRST ACT

The scene is laid in Belgium, in the home of Doctor Albert Esterlinck, surgeon and burgomaster of Aerschel. The time is toward the end of summer, 1914. Two men are standing in a long, rather low-ceiled room, talking together in cautious undertones. A large window to the left. Quaint window seat deep sunk in the thick wall. Door back leads to dining room. Door right leads to wide hall. At long intervals, people with fire-arms pass down this hall; those who carry revolvers lay them on a stout table, those with rifles hand them to the man behind the table, who stacks them in the corner of the hall. In this living room are a handsome cabinet, a long Flemish stove, a carved chest, curious brass and pewter dishes, and bits of valuable tapestry.

ACKERMANN (*gives his rifle to attendant, looks into living room, salutes Navez and Groux and walks in*)

A bad day's work, this, for Aerschel!

[*Navez paces up and down the room excitedly.*

GROUX

The town's ruined.

ACKERMANN

Think of it — twenty of our best men shot down like dogs!

GROUX

They got some good work in before they were killed; more than one Boche they had picked off.

ACKERMANN

We can thank our stars the whole town wasn't wiped out after that.

NAVEZ

We can thank the burgomaster.

ACKERMANN

Howd'ye like this job he's given you, taking our rifles away from us? I'd rather he'd ordered me shot. And why are we piling our guns up here?

GROUX

They've made an end of the town hall — one whole side gutted out.

NAVEZ

It's a God's blessing they didn't make an end of the burgomaster.

GROUX

Time enough yet for that or any other devil's work.

[*Hiessling slouches in unsteadily behind the little group and drops down on the window seat.*

ACKERMANN

Good God Almighty! I can't make it out. We're minding our own business, and all of a sudden we're dragged into this and blown sky-high. I wouldn't mind dying if I could give them all a good dose of lead first.

HIESSLING

Why — didn' — we — let 'em go — through — peaceful . . .

GROUX

Shut up, you drunken fool.

HIESSLING

Yes — let 'em — go! Let 'em — go — to hell!

[*Swaggers across the room into hall and starts to pick up a rifle.*

NAVEZ (*peremptorily*)

Take it away from him.

[*Attendant prevents Hiessling from taking the rifle.*

GROUX

You'll get run through with a bayonet if you try any of those monkey-shines around here.

HIESSLING

Goin' — be — soger.

GROUX

Where's *your* gun, Hiessling?

HIESSLING

Sold — my — lil — gun — to — Peter.

NAVEZ

If Peter wants to keep on living, he'll turn that gun in.

GROUX

And damned quick, too!

ACKERMANN (*as a gray-haired man limps in*)

Here comes Wirtz; perhaps he'll have something to tell us. Well, Wirtz, you're bringing her in, I see.

[*Wirtz hands over his rifle.*

WIRTZ

I'm bringing her in, I am; after forty years I'm giving up my gun. Well, our poor soldiers — God knows where they are now! And only God and the Boches know what's become of the boys General Bergheroff sent out yesterday.

ACKERMANN (*looks eagerly at Groux and Navez*)

They say the burgomaster's youngest son was one of them?

WIRTZ

Yes, Baldwin Esterlinck led them all. The lads fought for the chance to lead. That was a sight to remember. "Who knows the country to the north best?" sings out our general, and every mother's son of them yelled out, "I do!" But Baldwin Esterlinck, he pushed his way to the front of the boys, right under his father's very eyes, and called out: "I do. Don't I, Father?" Doctor Esterlinck, he stood still a minute, but he had to answer. "You know it well, my son." You should have seen the look on him, just as though he'd like to grab the boy up and run away with him. Anyhow, it seemed that way to me. "All right," said the general, "then you lead, my boy." He stopped short and stared at the ground for a minute, then he looked them straight in the eyes. "Boys! Take a good look; you may never see Aerschel again." They didn't turn a hair, just saluted and huzzaed . . . "Ride like the devil!" he called after them. And they made the dust fly. Not a lad older than sixteen, not a mother's son of them. And the burgomaster's son called out to his father, "Good-by, Father," as though it was a picnic he was going to.

GROUX

S-s-h! Here's Mrs. Esterlinck. She's not to know.

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*the burgomaster's wife is a matronly woman of forty-three. Good-natured face. Kind gray eyes. Brooding, perplexed expression*)

Pierre, do you know —

[*She stops short on seeing Ackermann and Wirtz.*

WIRTZ

Well, what do you think, Mrs. Esterlinck, they've fired Granny Misch's house. For ten years she's worked like a dray horse, worked her poor old fingers to the bone to pay off that mortgage, and now only the ground is left for her little grandchild, and no deed to show for *that!*

NAVEZ

Nobody's going to pick up her land and run away with it, as though it was horses.

GROUX

Or cows.

ACKERMANN

Or food.

NAVEZ

Or clothes.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Poor old Granny Misch!

ACKERMANN

Who had the mortgage?

WIRTZ

Old Tonniquet that owned the smelting works. They shot him this morning.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Why do they burn down the houses and kill innocent people?

WIRTZ (*bitterly*)

Reprisal, they call it.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It seems to me just plain murder. If only the boys and Marianne would come home. My poor Marianne, she's worried to death over Paul.

ACKERMANN (*low tone to Wirtz*)

Paul?

WIRTZ (*same tone*)

Paul Donnet.

ACKERMANN

Oh, I know — tall, light fellow, captain of his company.

[*Wirtz nods.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Yes, only think of it! To-morrow was to be their wedding day. They put it off last June on account of Bernard. We were all afraid Bernard would never get well.

NAVEZ

That's one thing you've got to be thankful for.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

If he'd only get his strength back! Yes, Marianne and Paul were to be married to-morrow. We didn't think then that all this would happen and that Paul would be away fighting, we don't know where, on the day that was to be his wedding day.

[*Marianne Esterlinck comes in. She is a lithe, graceful girl with vivid gray eyes now black from excitement. Her chin is quivering, and she can hardly speak.*

MARIANNE

Oh, Mother!

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*startled*)

Marianne! What's the matter? What's happened now?

MARIANNE

Father's a hostage. They've taken Father as a hostage. Father! Think of it, Mother — any one — a

drunken man — Hiessling here, can shoot a German soldier, and Father pays for it — with his life.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

That can't be possible.

MARIANNE

It's true. It's true. One of our own soldiers, Leon Neef, told me so. He's been hiding since daybreak. He got separated from his company when our soldiers were driven out. There were German soldiers all around. The Donnets took him in and hid him in a closet behind boxes and clothes. I saw him dressed up as an old woman. Now he's got away. He's taking messages to our general. He promised me to speak to Paul, if he ever gets back to the boys — if he ever does.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

That soldier's crazy. Your father — why, he's burgomaster.

MARIANNE

And so he's held responsible; they make him responsible for everything. Something's going to happen to him before it's all over, something's going to happen to Father.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

That isn't possible . . . The burgomaster! It isn't possible.

MARIANNE

Mother, don't you understand — just because he *is* burgomaster.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Going without his meals — no sleep — not a minute to himself!

MARIANNE

Somebody'll do some shooting, somebody's bound to. How can they help it? It wouldn't be human not to.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

But they'll have nothing to shoot with. They're bringing in all their arms: we're stacking them down cellar.

MARIANNE

All of them won't bring them . . . Don't you believe it, Mother.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Even Hiessling here.

[*Pointing to him.*

HIESSLING

Sol' — my — rifle — to — Peter.

MARIANNE

What did I tell you, Mother? They're keeping them back. We might as well say good-by to Father.

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*firm in her simple faith*)

But your father's *ordered* the guns turned in. They've got to do what the burgomaster wants.

MARIANNE

What do men care for orders when they're driven about like wild beasts. They don't want to give up their rifles now; they want to use them. . . . But they mustn't, they mustn't! And Father helping to save those German soldiers!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

But he's a surgeon, and a surgeon has to do a surgeon's work.

MARIANNE

I'd let my right hand rot off before I'd raise it to help one of them.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Oh, Marianne, you *say* that!

MARIANNE

Not if one of them was dying at my feet.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

You say that, Marianne; it's easy to talk, but when a man's dying, then you'd do anything for him.

WIRTZ

Don't you think it, Mrs. Esterlinck. When I was a lad I had those fine ideas. But I've had a taste of war in my time. That was in 1870, for I was brought up in France. My leg here, it speaks for itself; but for it I'd be tasting blood along with the boys yet. But if ever there was hell on earth — death and hell! And it was you or the other fellow. You lost what soul you ever had till you or him lay flat. Then you remembered, then you got human again. Talk about your fine feelings — the dead and the dying — you get so used to them you don't mind them no more than dead flies.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Where's Baldwin? And Bernard? They ought to be at home. Anything might happen . . .

NAVEZ (*calls out from hall*)

Oh, no, Mrs. Esterlinck.

GROUX

Your boys are all right.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I haven't laid my eyes on Baldwin since yesterday

morning. I didn't hear him last night. He went without his breakfast this morning. Bernard promised to bring him home. Where's Bernard staying all this time, hours and hours?

MARIANNE

It can't be so long, Mother. It seems longer to you than it really is.

[*Navez, Groux, Wirtz, and Ackermann are in the hall, grouped around the table, talking together in low, cautious tones.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

And Bernard isn't strong yet; he can't stand much.

MARIANNE

Mother, if anything had happened, you'd have heard of it by this time.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It's easy enough to say that.

MARIANNE

The boys are all right. But Father! Now they'll shoot some Boche in the back, and then Father'll be shot.

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*breaking in*)

Who would want to shoot your father, Marianne? Isn't he a good man? And the burgomaster. He couldn't be spared for a minute. And who would look after the wounded? Isn't he surgeon here?

MARIANNE

Mother — can't you understand? Father is a hostage. If there's any more shooting, Father'll be shot.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Do you mean to say they'd let them shoot Father?

MARIANNE

Let them!

HIESSLING (*slowly raising himself from the window seat*)

If — th' harm — a — hair — of — his — hic! — his head, hic! — we'll — kill 'em — kill 'em all. Hic!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

That's quite right, Hiessling.

ACKERMANN (*standing in the doorway*)

Short of eating a square meal, there's nothing I'd like better.

MARIANNE

No, no, you mustn't say such things. You mustn't, I tell you. You're to do as my father wants you to do. (*To Wirtz who has come into the room, followed by Navez and Groux.*) Make them do it, Navez, Mr. Wirtz, all of you, make them bring in every firearm in town. Make them understand — tell them — it's Father's life — my father's life.

MRS. ESTERLINCK.

That's only to scare them, Marianne; they wouldn't really shoot Father.

MARIANNE

You don't know what they'll do to Father.

BERNARD (*bursts in*)

Mother — I've got to — help — somehow . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Wait till you're stronger, Bernard. See — you're all of a tremble now.

BERNARD

I've got to help, I've got to.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Where's Baldwin? Where've you been?

BERNARD

I'd rather die than stand by and see such things. It isn't possible to do nothing . . . If *I* could have gone —

[*He catches Marianne's warning glance and breaks off abruptly.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Gone? Gone where? Has Baldwin gone somewhere?

MARIANNE

Bernard, why do you frighten Mother?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Where's Baldwin? What's become of him?

BERNARD (*with assumed carelessness*)

Oh, Baldwin's all right.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I must go out, myself, and look for my boy.

BERNARD

Don't worry, Mother, he's big enough to look out for himself.

NAVEZ

Baldwin's all right.

BERNARD

Of course Baldwin's all right.

MARIANNE

Wouldn't Father know?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It's easy to say that.

[*Navez and Groux go over to Hiessling, rouse him, and walk him out between them.*

MARIANNE

Now don't worry any more about Baldwin. Don't

you think about Father? Don't you think about him at all?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

A burgomaster can take care of himself. But he ought to look after his children, too . . . riding around with that German general, caring for his men, and his own people waiting here!

MARIANNE

How can he help it? You said so yourself a minute ago: "A surgeon has to do a surgeon's work." Haven't I told you over and over that Father's —

BERNARD (*breaks in*)

What's the matter with Father? What are you talking about?

MARIANNE

But — Bernard — surely you —

BERNARD

Marianne!

MARIANNE

Mother knows — I've told her.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Knows what, Marianne?

MARIANNE

That Father's a hostage.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

He'll manage all right, he always does.

MARIANNE

Yes, he'll manage all right, he'll be shot. It isn't what Father does, Mother, it's what the people here in town do. Oh! I can't believe that all this has happened. (*Goes to the window and looks out*)

Only yesterday the green grass and the tall trees and the fields of yellow corn . . . and now . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Just the same, he ought to be at home — a boy of fourteen.

MARIANNE

If anything had happened to Baldwin, we'd have heard of it.

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*to the men in the hall who are trying to persuade Hiessling to go with them*)

Come — all of you. Let the poor fellow come along, too. He isn't doing any harm. A bowl of soup'll do him good, perhaps.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck leads the way into the dining room. Marianne and Bernard are left alone.*

BERNARD

God knows *what's* happened to Baldwin by this time.

MARIANNE

What do you mean? What have you heard?

BERNARD

Listen, Marianne, Mother's not to know this — whatever comes.

MARIANNE

Well? Go on.

BERNARD

Father doesn't want her to know.

MARIANNE

You know I won't tell Mother.

BERNARD

Remember now.

MARIANNE

Go on, tell me.

BERNARD

Well then — Baldwin was one of the boys sent out by General Bergheroff.

MARIANNE

Yes, yes, I know —

BERNARD

You know?

MARIANNE

Yes, yes, go on.

BERNARD

Baldwin led all the boys.

MARIANNE

Our Baldwin! Think of it!

BERNARD

Yes, tell *me* to think of it! Father was there when they started — the edge of the town just beyond old Wirtz's place.

MARIANNE

How proud Father must have been.

BERNARD

They all begged the general to let them lead. But Baldwin, he was the one chosen. (*To himself, quivering with repressed passion*) *I* should have been there. *I* should have been the one.

MARIANNE

And that's all you've got to tell me, Bernard?

BERNARD

All? Isn't that enough? You think that nothing — to risk his life!

MARIANNE

Do I, Bernard? Let me tell you something — I knew all about Baldwin from the first, from the

time he heard that General Bergheroff wanted scouts. He told me that he meant to go. He kept it from you purposely. He didn't want Mother to find out. He knew how she'd take it. I tried every way to persuade him not to go. For her sake. I begged and I pleaded. But I could see that he meant to go.

BERNARD

It was my place to go, it was my place!

MARIANNE

Yes, Bernard, if you'd been strong enough, but —

BERNARD

You kept it from me. You took my chance away from me.

MARIANNE

Baldwin went for your sake — in your place.

BERNARD

Yes, in *my* place. I'm strong enough to ride a horse. I'm strong enough to carry a rifle.

MARIANNE

How could you go, Bernard, ill as you've been?

BERNARD

Why did you keep it from me? Our soldiers driven out of town! . . . our rifles taken away from us!

MARIANNE

Isn't this enough — all this horror? Not one of the boys back . . .

BERNARD

Not one.

MARIANNE

You don't think he's been killed — you don't think that? Oh, Bernard!

BERNARD

The road they took led straight into the enemy, straight into the Uhlans —

MARIANNE (*with quiet despair*)

The Uhlans have them then.

BERNARD

Yes — if they're alive.

MARIANNE

The Uhlans have them — living or dead.

BERNARD

Living or dead.

MARIANNE

It will kill Mother.

BERNARD

She mustn't find out.

MARIANNE

Not at once — not right away. But she's got to know — sometime.

BERNARD

Yes, yes, when we've heard something.

MARIANNE

Oh! what shall we do!

BERNARD

If he's safe —

MARIANNE

Yes — *if* —

BERNARD

Then — then it's time enough for her to know.

MARIANNE

But — if he isn't safe?

BERNARD (*fearfully*)

If he missed the Uhlans — there were the shells.

MARIANNE

Mother's got to know.

BERNARD

Not yet! Not yet!

MARIANNE

I told her he'd been home. I pulled the bedclothes all apart to make her think he'd been home, sleeping. She thinks he went out after Father had gone.

BERNARD

She keeps asking for him.

MARIANNE

All the time.

BERNARD

How are we going to let her know the truth?

MARIANNE

Oh, I don't know . . . I don't know.

BERNARD

Father thinks he can keep it from her.

MARIANNE

How long? She's got to know sometime.

BERNARD

I can't ever tell her.

MARIANNE

No, no, you mustn't. Dear Jesus, isn't this horrible?

(*Enter Father Antoine. He carries a basket*)

BERNARD

Here's Father Antoine.

MARIANNE

Father, we are in great trouble.

BERNARD

Yes, Father.

FATHER ANTOINE

This is indeed great trouble that has come upon us all.

MARIANNE

Father Antoine, we want you to help us.

FATHER ANTOINE

My child, if I can help you in any way.

MARIANNE

Father — it's about my brother.

FATHER ANTOINE (*turns to Bernard*)

Your brother?

BERNARD

Not me, Father. Baldwin.

FATHER ANTOINE

The little brother.

BERNARD

Yes, Father, Baldwin.

MARIANNE

Oh, Father, we don't know what's happened to him.

BERNARD

Not one of the boys the General sent out has been seen or heard from — not one!

MARIANNE

And Mother doesn't know that Baldwin was one of them. She doesn't know it.

BERNARD

Should she be told, Father?

MARIANNE

Shouldn't she, Father, now — before — anything worse — happens?

FATHER ANTOINE

I think the mother should be told.

BERNARD

But if Father doesn't want — .

MARIANNE (*interrupts*)

Yes, now — before it's too late.

FATHER ANTOINE

She doesn't know that your brother's in danger?

BERNARD

She suspects. But she doesn't know.

MARIANNE

Not even that he wasn't at home last night. I scattered the bedclothes all around to make her think he'd slept in the bed.

FATHER ANTOINE

You mustn't deceive her.

MARIANNE

Yes, but I'm afraid she can't stand it, Father.

FATHER ANTOINE

Every hour that you put it off only makes it the harder.

MARIANNE

Then, Father Antoine, *you* must tell her.

BERNARD

But — if we break the news to her — all at once — suddenly —

MARIANNE

Father Antoine will know how to tell her, Bernard.

BERNARD

Of course, Marianne.

MARIANNE

Think, Father Antoine, he led all the other boys.

FATHER ANTOINE

Whatever happens, you'll have that to remember and be proud of.

MARIANNE

Mother's whole heart's set on Baldwin.

FATHER ANTOINE

The youngest, of course — I understand.

MARIANNE

She'll never live through it, if anything happens to him.

FATHER ANTOINE

She must summon the courage to endure it.

MARIANNE

And don't you think, Father, if something hadn't happened, we would have heard from the boys by now?

FATHER ANTOINE

We mustn't despair.

MARIANNE

Father Antoine, if *you* tell her, it won't be so bad then; you can help her to bear it.

BERNARD

Yes, Father.

FATHER ANTOINE

Call her, my child. I'll ask her first about the food and bandages.

BERNARD (*opens the door and calls*)

Mother! Mother!

[*Mrs. Esterlinck comes in. She doesn't see Father Antoine at once.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Is it Baldwin? Has Baldwin —

MARIANNE

Father Antoine, Mother.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Oh, Father, I'm sick at heart! That I should live to see this day!

FATHER ANTOINE

We must help all we can and find our consolation in good work.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Marianne, get Ritta to fill Father Antoine's basket.

MARIANNE

Yes, Mother.

[*Marianne goes out with basket.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

And Bernard — bring what bandages are left . . . Such want and misery!

[*Bernard leaves the room.*

FATHER ANTOINE

We should thank God for the power of helping others — as your husband is helping — with our own lives, if need be.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Yes, but a man must take care of his children, Father. And if my husband's all worn out, how's he to help others?

FATHER ANTOINE

He's a strong man, Daughter, and a wise man.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

He should look after his children . . . How do I know what's happening to Baldwin.

FATHER ANTOINE

Your children are all good children, brave children.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Brave — that's just it, Father; there's no holding them back — not one of them.

FATHER ANTOINE

You should be glad of that, Daughter: now is the time for courage.

[*Marianne returns with Ritta who carries Father Antoine's basket.*

RITTA

Good day, your Reverence.

FATHER ANTOINE

Good day, Ritta. You have filled my basket quickly.

MARIANNE

I am sorry there is nothing more to spare to-day.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

But to-morrow morning, Father, you shall have it filled again.

[*Bernard returns with bandages. Mrs. Esterlinck puts them in the basket.*

FATHER ANTOINE

I shall be here with my basket. (*Looks into the basket*) You have given most generously. And now, before I go, give me one thing more.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Gladly, Father, anything I have to give.

FATHER ANTOINE

What I want you to give me now is your promise that you will be brave — as you should be — if this trouble at our doors touches you more closely.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

You mean my husband — they've made him . . . what is it, Bernard?

MARIANNE

A hostage, Mother.

FATHER ANTOINE

No, Daughter, I don't mean your husband. For him there is nothing but gratitude. He has saved the town.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It isn't my Baldwin you mean? (*Sinks back like one stunned*) It's Baldwin. Baldwin's dead.

FATHER ANTOINE

No, but if that were our blessed Lord's will you should thank Him that your boy went to a glorious death.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I can't spare him, he mustn't die.

[*Marianne comes back.*

FATHER ANTOINE

Do not think of his death —

MARIANNE

He *isn't* dead, Mother.

BERNARD

No, no!

FATHER ANTOINE

Do not think of his death or his danger. Think only of his courage, leading a band of boys all older than he — for our general — your boy of fourteen. Doesn't it give you great joy?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I am afraid, Father, I am afraid.

FATHER ANTOINE

Pray for courage, Daughter; think of your son's courage.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

O God, O God! — if he is only alive and comes home to me!

FATHER ANTOINE

Be brave, be brave, and submit yourself to the will of God.

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*dully*)

Yes, Father.

FATHER ANTOINE

[*Father Antoine gets up and takes his basket.* (*Walks toward hall, Mrs. Esterlinck walks by his side*)

Be brave, Daughter, and God bless you. God bless you, children.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck goes into hall with him.*

BERNARD (*to Marianne, sinks his voice*)

We shouldn't have told him . . . (*As she comes back into the room*) See how pale she looks.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Some one must go after him; he's only a child.

MARIANNE

Don't, don't give up so, Mother. Baldwin'll come riding home soon, safe and sound . . . And think, Mother, how proud you'll be of him then.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It's well enough for you to talk . . . But I know . . . Why do they send out boys? Are there no grown men left in the town?

BERNARD

Baldwin always wanted to be a soldier; now he's got a soldier's job. If *I* had got the chance —

MARIANNE (*at the window, excitedly, with rejoicing in her tone*)

Look! Mother! Bernard!

BERNARD

What . . . ?

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*starts up*)

Baldwin . . . ?

BERNARD

No, no, Mother. (*Mrs. Esterlinck sinks back in her chair*) It's Father.

[*Goes to her and tries to comfort her.*

MARIANNE

Father! Safe home! Safe home!

BERNARD

Mother, you mustn't give up like this; you mustn't let these strange soldiers see you this way.

MARIANNE

There are five of them. Two of them are staying in the machine. Now they're coming. (*She runs to her mother*) Be brave, Mother, as Father Antoine said. Think of poor, poor Father.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*summoning Navez and Groux to him as he enters the living room*)

Pierre! Jean! Get ready for dictation. Half a minute now.

[*Marianne runs up to him. He embraces her. Then he embraces his wife, who gazes past him toward the hall door.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Who are these strange men?

DR. ESTERLINCK

General von Wahlhayn and his Staff . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

The German general. . . ?

DR. ESTERLINCK (*a caution in his tone*)

They're going to make the house headquarters, Angela.

BERNARD (*under his breath*)

Headquarters — here!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Our house!

MARIANNE (*cautiously*)

These strange soldiers! Oh, Father!

BERNARD (*bitterly, under his breath*)

We take them into our own house — do we?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

And my Baldwin lying out in the woods dead, perhaps . . . And who knows . . . perhaps one of these very soldiers —

MARIANNE

Mother!

BERNARD

Father, do we have to have these men here, here in the house with us?

DR. ESTERLINCK

S-s-h! my son! Walls have ears.

[*General von Wahlhayn and Falkenhorst, his Chief of Staff enter. Falkenhorst looks at Marianne admiringly, then turns back to talk with Richter and Barnstorff.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

While my family looks after your comfort, General von Wahlhayn, I will dictate the proclamation for my people.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Warn them well. Make them understand there's to be no more trifling.

DR. ESTERLINCK

My wife, your Excellency. (*General von Wahlhayn bows formally*)

[*Mrs. Esterlinck acknowledges his silent salutation with a timid bow*

My son and daughter.

[*All bow silently.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Make the proclamation clear. Put it plainly: If any member of any household is found firing at my soldiers, all the members of that household shall be put to death.

[*Dr. Esterlinck and General von Wahlhayn step back into the hall.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*in a tone of dazed despair*)

All! All!

MARIANNE (*in a tense undertone*)

The innocent with the guilty . . . (*as her father comes in, same tone*) That man — what he said — just now — it's horrible —

DR. ESTERLINCK (*with a look and gesture he silences her. To his wife*)

Angela, get what you can for them to eat.

BERNARD

Feed them, too . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*to Bernard*)

You show them up-stairs.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Let Ritta —

DR. ESTERLINCK

No.

MARIANNE (*suddenly*)

Not Baldwin's room!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

No, no, not Baldwin's room!

[*Marianne leads her mother into the dining room. Barnard conducts General von Wahlhayn and his Staff up-stairs.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*seats himself at a table in the front of living room, calls out to his men*)

Pierre! Jean!

[*Navez and Groux come in, and he motions to them to sit down.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*begins to dictate the proclamation*)

Every attack on German troops by others than the military in uniform not only exposes those who may be guilty to be shot, but will also bring further terrible consequences on leading citizens now held as hostages by the commander of the German troops, and on the burgomaster who—is—himself—a—hostage . . .

(*Pauses in his dictation as Wirtz followed by Bernard enters from hall, catches the expression on Wirtz's face*)

BERNARD (*intensively*)

What's the — what have you heard, Wirtz?

DR. ESTERLINCK

[*Taking up the dictation, repeats:*

Himself—a—hostage . . . (*Goes on quickly:*) Certain inhabitants of Aerschel having made various attacks upon the German troops, the Commander

General has already caused houses to be burned down and twenty leading citizens to be shot. Therefore: All inhabitants are hereby warned—

WIRTZ (*breaking in on the dictation*)

We've got word, Dr. Esterlinck.

[*Dr. Esterlinck remains silent.*

BERNARD (*cries out*)

Father! You hear!

WIRTZ

About your boy — he wouldn't surrender — so —

BERNARD

He's dead, Baldwin's dead!

WIRTZ

They shot him — he wouldn't give up.

[*Dr. Esterlinck's face works convulsively, he grips the table; gradually he regains an appearance of composure.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Pierre . . . Jean . . . let us . . . go on . . . with the dictation . . .

[*Bernard steals up to the stack of revolvers on the table in the hall, and, unseen, slips a revolver into his pocket.*

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

Scene is the same as in Act I.

MARIANNE (*alone with her father in the living room. Voices of General von Wahlhayn and the members of his Staff are heard from the dining room. Some one sings snatches of German songs*)

Father, how can you stand it to hear those men laughing and singing in there?

DR. ESTERLINCK

We stand what we have to stand.

MARIANNE (*passionately*)

I wish every mouthful would choke them — choke them — They've killed my brother — killed Baldwin.

DR. ESTERLINCK

S-s-h, Marianne! You've got to stop this. It won't do — my child.

MARIANNE (*keeping back the tears*)

Father — I must talk to some one. I can't stand it any longer — all alone . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

My poor child!

MARIANNE

Baldwin's been killed . . . and now — Paul — he'll be the next one. And not a soul to talk to . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

Women know best what to say to young girls.

MARIANNE

I can't talk to Mother now.

DR. ESTERLINCK

She's had a blow she'll never get over.

MARIANNE

Father — it seems selfish, of me, I know, to think of myself — at such a time — But I'm frightened to death about Paul.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Time enough, child, when troubles come. Don't go to meet them halfway.

MARIANNE

Father, I can't help it.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Try to comfort your mother a little now.

MARIANNE

Don't think I'm forgetting — Baldwin — or Mother . . . But this worry about Paul — all to myself — it seems as though it would kill me . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

Think of your mother — how's she's loved you all — and worked and worried — all these years —

MARIANNE

I *do* think of her. I think of her — and of Baldwin — all the time. But it doesn't help, Father, it only makes it worse. And the worry about Paul keeps right on. Couldn't you get some word —

DR. ESTERLINCK

If anything had happened, we'd have had word.

MARIANNE

You won't keep it from me — you'll tell me — won't you, Father?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes, Marianne.

MARIANNE

Whatever happens?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes. There, don't cross your bridges till you get to them.

MARIANNE

Anything — anything — but this suspense.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Where's your mother?

MARIANNE

Up-stairs. She went to change her dress.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Where's Bernard!?

MARIANNE

He went up-stairs too.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*deeply troubled*)

I don't like the way she's taking it. She mustn't be left alone too much.

MARIANNE

She hasn't slept since we first heard of the danger — before the Germans got here. She was afraid — afraid for Bernard — and for Baldwin.

DR. ESTERLINCK

God knows what's going to happen next.

MARIANNE

No sleep . . . She can't go on this way.

DR. ESTERLINCK

After a while — I'll give her something . . . Where's Bernard?

MARIANNE

Upstairs with Mother. (*Looking at him anxiously*) You asked me that once before.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes, — I've got Bernard on my mind to-night.

MARIANNE

Why, Father? Why are you worrying about Bernard? He's safe. He's getting along all right.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Bernard's got wrong notions in his head.

MARIANNE

Wrong notions? What do you mean, Father?

DR. ESTERLINCK

He's a boy with a man's courage and a girl's strength. And he's drunk with hate now — hate and rage — drunk with it, weak as he is.

MARIANNE

Father, you can't blame him — you can't. When I think of Baldwin — and look at these strange soldiers — I want to drive them away — somehow — out of our town — out of our sight — off of our land — ours!

DR. ESTERLINCK (*cautions her*)

Marianne, Marianne!

MARIANNE (*in a choked voice*)

Father, I've never held a weapon in my hand, but when I look at these men — I — could — kill . . . I want to kill them. I, myself . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

You've got to control yourselves — you and Bernard. Your one thought must be the safety of

Aerschel — the safety of our people. For that I'm responsible — I must answer.

MARIANNE

Nothing's going to happen to you, Father: nothing *shall* happen.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Law and order — that's the thing!

MARIANNE (*sinking her voice*)

And we have to stand it? There's no way? Our soldiers can't drive them out?

DR. ESTERLINCK

No . . . We've got to do the best we can.

MARIANNE

Our poor country!

DR. ESTERLINCK

Law and order! That's the way to love our country now — now that we're helpless. We mustn't throw our people's lives away. Besides — you can't spare me yet awhile — not till Paul comes back — can you?

MARIANNE (*goes up to him and puts her arm around his neck*)

As if I could *ever* spare you!

DR. ESTERLINCK

And your mother couldn't spare me — even then.

MARIANNE

Oh, Father, you know the German general wouldn't harm you. See how he treats you. How about the man that shot one of his soldiers in the back? Nothing happened to you. Weren't you a hostage then?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Child, General von Wahlhayn has a heart. He shut his eyes to that. That happened once. It

won't happen again. Another time, and I pay. Reprisal — that's orders. And orders are orders.

MARIANNE

Father, don't talk about it. I can't bear to think about it.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Did your mother eat any supper?

MARIANNE

No, she hasn't taken a mouthful since breakfast.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Your brother's death has stunned her.

MARIANNE

You're going to look for Baldwin. You're going to try to find him?

DR. ESTERLINCK

If it's possible — to-morrow — at daybreak.

MARIANNE

If Mother could only see him — perhaps then . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

That would be the hardest thing of all for her to bear.

MARIANNE

No, for then she'd realize that he *is* dead.

[*Marianne's voice chokes. She breaks down. Dr. Esterlinck sits with bowed head.*

MARIANNE (*swallowing a sob*)

She's kept calling him softly — to herself — all day long — just as though she didn't know.

DR. ESTERLINCK

She must have some sleep to-night. I'll give her something.

MARIANNE

Who's that laughing so loud?

DR. ESTERLINCK

That man — Falkenhorst — the General's Chief of Staff.

MARIANNE (*shudders as the laughter grows louder*)

Oh! how can they!

DR. ESTERLINCK

He must be drinking.

MARIANNE

Hasn't the general eyes? Can't he see?

[*There is a fresh outburst of laughter.*

MARIANNE

Why doesn't the general stop them?

DR. ESTERLINCK

He isn't noticing. He's thinking about something else.

MARIANNE

Perhaps he's drinking, too.

DR. ESTERLINCK

No, he's not that kind.

MARIANNE

He ought to watch his men. Perhaps they'll all get drunk.

DR. ESTERLINCK

No. The Chief of Staff had been drinking before dinner.

MARIANNE

He'll frighten Ritta — the way he's acting.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Oh, the man's not drunk. But keep Bernard out of his way while I'm gone.

MARIANNE

Oh, Father — you're not going to leave us.

DR. ESTERLINCK

The general wants to look at — a — position —

MARIANNE

This German general!

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes.

MARIANNE

And you *have* to go!

DR. ESTERLINCK

There's nothing to fear. We'll not be long. I'm worn out. I've got to sleep to-night.

MARIANNE

And to-morrow you'll look for — Baldwin.

DR. ESTERLINCK

To-morrow — at dawn. The general must give me a passport.

MARIANNE

But — if you're a — hostage, Father.

DR. ESTERLINCK

It's got to be done. I'll speak to General von Wahlhayn — to-night.

MARIANNE

Here's Mother coming — and Bernard.

[*The burgomaster steps forward to meet his wife and takes her in his arms. She seems strangely impassive. He looks at her closely.*

BERNARD (*anxiously*)

Father — if Mother could manage to get a little rest . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*sinking his voice*)

I'll see to that — now — before I leave . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Are you going for Baldwin? He ought not to lie out there in the woods alone.

BERNARD (*to his father*)

I can't stand this. I can't — I tell you. I'll get away — somehow . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

You're anxious to be shot, my boy. Wait a little. Give your mother a little time to get over your brother's death, first.

BERNARD (*despairingly*)

Look at her!

DR. ESTERLINCK (*to his wife*)

You've put on your black silk gown.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Baldwin always liked to see me in this.

[*The door of the dining room is opened by Richter. Falkenhorst and Barnstorff are seen to rise and stand at attention. They salute General von Wahlhayn as he passes into the living room.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I regret that you and your family could not give us the honor of your company.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Under the circumstances your Excellency will excuse us . . . my son's death . . . Naturally, my wife . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I understand . . . Make no apology.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*addresses Mrs. Esterlinck*)

I make you my compliments on your hospitality. (*He turns to the burgomaster*) But you will do me

the favor to lock up your wine. (*He calls his men*) Richter! Barnstorff!

[*The men enter, salute and stand at attention.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

The proclamations!

[*They salute again and pass into the hall.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Now, Dr. Esterlinck — be so good . . . in a few minutes . . . We will wait . . .

[*He goes out. A copy of the proclamation has fallen to the floor.* BERNARD (*has picked it up and is reading it to himself as he comes into the living room. Suddenly, with repressed passion he reads aloud:* All inhabitants are hereby warned that if any civilian member of any household makes further assault upon the troops of occupation quartered upon such household, all members of that household shall be put to death . . .

MARIANNE (*fearfully*)

All will be put to death . . . The innocent with the guilty . . . How can he do such things!

DR. ESTERLINCK

He is a general, and this is war.

MARIANNE

That Chief of Staff — isn't he going, too?

DR. ESTERLINCK

The man isn't fit to go. The general must see that.

MARIANNE

So he's to stay here — alone . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

There are orderlies all around. Oh, the man's not really drunk. Let him alone.

BERNARD

Don't be afraid, Marianne. I can look out for him.

[*The burgomaster and his daughter exchange glances.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*turns to his wife*)

My poor Angela! Go up and rest. Try to get a little sleep.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck does not seem to have heard the burgomaster.*

MARIANNE

Mother!

[*Mrs. Esterlinck pays no attention.*

MARIANNE (*sharply*)

Mother!

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*a little querulously*)

What is it?

MARIANNE

Father's speaking to you.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Don't you think you ought to go up and lie down?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

No, no, Albert.

DR. ESTERLINCK

And you don't eat . . .

MARIANNE

Let me get you a cup of tea, Mother.

[*Forgetting, she starts to enter the dining room.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Don't go in there. You go — Bernard — through the hall. (*He hands Bernard a tablet*) Tell Ritta not to go into the dining room now — till *he* leaves. (*Sinks his voice. To Marianne*) See that she gets it all. (*To his wife*) Drink your tea and lie down, Angela.

MARIANNE (*stopping him in the doorway*)

Father . . . Must you go . . . ?

DR. ESTERLINCK

There's no help for it . . . Whatever the general commands — I must do.

[*The burgomaster goes out.*

MARIANNE (*goes over to her mother and takes her hand*)

Mother!

[*Mrs. Esterlinck sits passively and lets her hand rest in Marianne's. After a minute the door to the dining room is opened wide, and Falkenhorst, the Chief of Staff, appears in the doorway. He is holding a glass of wine in his hand. He lifts the glass and looks at it.*

FALKENHORST

Meine Damen und Herren — prosit!

[*Falkenhorst laughs, lifts the glass to his lips, and drains it: then he lets it fall. Mrs. Esterlinck gazes at him with a strange, calm gaze. Marianne utters a little cry; Falkenhorst goes up to her. She stands quite still. Suddenly he lifts her hand to his lips. She withdraws her hand slowly, a storm of hatred gathering in her eyes.*

FALKENHORST

Such black looks do not go well with so pretty a face, *Fräulein.*

[*She tries to pass by him. He blocks her way.*

MARIANNE

Oh! . . . If you please . . .

FALKENHORST

Why are you not calm? I mean you no harm.

MARIANNE

I am not afraid . . .

[*Falkenhorst laughs.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*as though awakening suddenly to a sense of the situation*)

Marianne!

[*Falkenhorst looks from Mrs. Esterlinck to the wine glass on the floor, stares at it a little while, and then goes back into the dining room. Marianne, using the door as a screen, slowly pushes it to. Bernard returns by way of the hall. He carries a cup of tea.*

MARIANNE (*to Bernard, who starts to speak*)

S-s-h! He's been in here — that man . . .

BERNARD (*clenches his fists*)

If I could —

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Be still, Bernard. We must give up to them. Baldwin was the first. You'll be the next. Then Father. What will happen to Marianne? I am an old woman. It doesn't matter about me.

MARIANNE

Old? You're not old.

BERNARD

What are you talking about, Mother? You're a young woman. Old at forty-three!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

What happens to me doesn't matter. But you and Marianne . . .

BERNARD

If we were men!

MARIANNE

What can we do — so few of us — and a great army of them . . .

BERNARD

Here, Mother — you must drink your tea.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck pays no attention.*

MARIANNE

Mother . . . what are you thinking about?

BERNARD (*holding the cup to his mother's lips*)

Here, Mother.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I want my boy back, Baldwin, my little boy.

BERNARD

I'd be glad to change places with him for your sake, Mother.

MARIANNE

Baldwin's been spared all this. You can be glad of that, Mother.

BERNARD

Take the rest of the tea, now. There's only a mouthful left.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck drinks it. Bernard puts the cup and saucer on the table beside which Marianne has just sat down.*

MARIANNE (*who has buried her face in her hands, gives a start of nervous terror at the clatter of the cup in the saucer*)

Ugh!

BERNARD

Why — what —

MARIANNE

Bernard . . . the way that man looked at me!

BERNARD

Marianne, you must go up-stairs — you and Mother.

MARIANNE

And leave you here with a drunken man — all alone? No, Bernard, I'll take Mother up, but I'm coming down again to stay with you.

BERNARD

You mustn't come down again, you mustn't.

[*From the direction of the dining room comes the prolonged sound of the clicking of a knife against a glass. Bernard and Marianne listen anxiously.*

MARIANNE (*in a half-whisper*)

He wants something more to drink.

BERNARD

He'll not get it.

RITTA (*hurries in*)

He's calling me — that man. He wants more wine. He's emptied the bottle. (*Ritta has been speaking to Mrs. Esterlinck, who pays no attention to her: now she turns to Marianne*) Miss Marianne, — I can't go in there — to him.

MARIANNE

No, Ritta, you needn't go. Pay no attention to him.

RITTA

He'll be coming into the kitchen next.

MARIANNE

Bolt the door, Ritta.

RITTA

Eating us out of house and home . . . There'll be nothing left for Father Antoine.

[*The clicking begins again.*

Hear that!

BERNARD

Let him keep it up till he gets tired.

MARIANNE

Oh, I do hope Father'll be back soon.

BERNARD

Bolt the kitchen door, Ritta.

MARIANNE

Can't you stay out of the kitchen, Ritta?

RITTA

The dishes are piled that high, Miss.

[*She indicates.*

MARIANNE

Never mind, Ritta . . . You go upstairs with Mother . . . Stay with her a while. Now, Mother, Ritta'll take care of you.

[*Bernard helps his mother up.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I don't need Ritta. I'd rather be alone.

[*Sound of rapping on the table.*

FALKENHORST'S VOICE

Hey, there! You there! . . .

MARIANNE

He's getting ugly.

BERNARD

You go up, too, Marianne.

MARIANNE (*firmly*)

No.

See that Mother lies down, Ritta.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck and Ritta go out.*

BERNARD

How long's that man going to stay in the dining room!

MARIANNE

If he'd only go up to his room . . . He'd soon fall asleep with all the wine he's taken.

[*They sit down together in the shadow. Falkenhorst can be heard talking to himself in the dining room. Marianne and Bernard remain silent, listening.*

FALKENHORST (*rapping on the table and raising his voice*)

Hey, there! . . . You there! . . . Another bottle! (*A minute passes*) Hey, there! . . . You, there! . . .

RITTA (*who has come down-stairs again, steals to the door. Cautiously*)

Miss Marianne! . . . Are you there?

MARIANNE (*coming forward to Ritta. Softly*)

Yes, what's the matter, Ritta?

RITTA

She won't undress, and she won't lie down, and she wants me to go on with the work. She doesn't mind that man.

BERNARD

You go on up, Marianne.

MARIANNE

Let her alone. She'll fall asleep after a while.

RITTA (*stoutly*)

Then I'll go back to my work.

MARIANNE

If you're not afraid . . .

RITTA

Afraid! . . . He'll not break the door down, I guess.

[*Ritta passes quietly down the hall. Falkenhorst is heard walking about in the dining room. His steps come nearer. Marianne and Bernard fall back into the shadow as the Chief of Staff opens the door and walks in.*

FALKENHORST (*laughs to himself. Aloud*)
Meine Damen und Herren — prosit!

MARIANNE (*to Bernard, in a half-whisper*)
He's at that again . . .
[*Falkenhorst stands between door to dining room and door to hall.*

BERNARD (*to Marianne*)
For the love of God . . . get out of the room.

MARIANNE (*same low, tense voice*)
No. I feel safer here with you.

BERNARD
Look at the man . . .

MARIANNE
He's drunk all right.

BERNARD
Yes, he mustn't see you . . .

MARIANNE
I'm not afraid.

BERNARD
You mustn't be.

MARIANNE
What could happen?

BERNARD (*in a half-whisper*)
The way he looked at you — Marianne — before . . .
How was it?

MARIANNE
He kissed my hand.

BERNARD
You must slip out quietly before he sees you.

MARIANNE
If you could get him away from the door . . .

BERNARD

I'll speak to him . . . then you slip out.

MARIANNE (*holds him back*)

No, no, Bernard . . . wait.

BERNARD

Marianne . . . he mustn't see you . . .

MARIANNE

Why don't they come back? Why don't they come?

BERNARD

S-s-h! Now — while his back is turned — go!

[*Marianne crosses the room softly: just as she reaches the hall door, Falkenhorst wheels into her path.*

FALKENHORST

Ah, so . . . you are here — *gnädiges Fräulein?* (*She tries to push past him: then reconsiders and stands perfectly still, looking at him with what sternness she can command. He takes her hand and raises it to his lips with an elaborate show of gallantry. She draws herself up to her full height, and, looking him steadily in the eyes, shakes off his hold. Bernard, who has come up to Falkenhorst, makes a menacing movement which the Chief of Staff either does not see or chooses to disregard*) So! . . . You do not like me, *Fräulein?*

[*He takes her hand again. She tries to break away.*

MARIANNE

Don't!

BERNARD (*pale and sullen*)

Stop!

[*Falkenhorst lets go of her hand and makes her a low bow.*

FALKENHORST

Do not be afraid.

MARIANNE

I am not afraid.

FALKENHORST

That is good — very good — that I like. Not afraid — eh? Why are you in such a hurry to get away from me?

MARIANNE

Let me pass — if you please.

BERNARD (*makes a move as though to free Marianne's wrist from Falkenhorst's grasp*)

Don't you understand? Let my sister pass. What right —

MARIANNE (*in a sharp whisper*)

Bernard!

FALKENHORST (*without looking at Bernard*)

She can speak for herself, *junger Herr.*

[*Marianne restrains Bernard.*

FALKENHORST

Not afraid! . . . Good! . . . You may pass, *gnädiges Fräulein.*

[*He salutes and stands at attention. She turns to go. At the same moment Falkenhorst observes Bernard's menacing attitude.*

FALKENHORST (*with a short, ironic laugh*)

Good night! . . . First you will bid me good night.

MARIANNE

Good night.

FALKENHORST

Your hand, *gnädiges Fräulein.*

[*He takes her hand.*

BERNARD (*springs at him*)

Let go — I tell you.

MARIANNE

Bernard!

FALKENHORST (*ignoring Bernard*)

Fräulein — gnädiges Fräulein — our maidens are good to look at, but they have not such a little devil shining in their eyes. Not afraid — No? . . . Not afraid of me?

MARIANNE (*waving Bernard back*)

No, I'm not afraid.

FALKENHORST

Such a pretty hand! . . . Not afraid? . . . And you have a pretty mouth, *Fräulein*. Suppose — now — I — take — a little kiss . . .

[*Marianne starts back. The Chief of Staff puts his arm around her and strains her to him, kissing her fiercely as he drags her toward the door. Marianne breaks away. He follows her. Bernard walks stealthily after him with drawn revolver. There is a confused sound of footsteps.*

MARIANNE'S VOICE (*muffled from the hall*)

Oh! — don't! . . .

[*There is the report of a revolver and the dull thud of a falling body. Then a moment's silence. With hands raised, palms outward, covering her eyes, Marianne walks backwards into the room.*

RITTA (*comes in*)

What was that, Miss Marianne?

MARIANNE (*slowly lowering her hands*)

S-s-h!

RITTA

My heart stood still. I thought some one was shot.

MARIANNE

S-s-h! Ritta . . . Yes — he's dead — that man!

RITTA

Dead!

MARIANNE

Ritta! . . . if they've heard . . . if they come in . . . nothing's happened . . . here . . . It was outside . . . somewhere — that shot.

[*Marianne and Ritta stand together, straining their ears for the sound of approaching footsteps. Marianne's attitude is one of agonized suspense.*

RITTA

They're not coming . . . They didn't notice . . . So much shooting all the time . . . They couldn't tell where —

MARIANNE (*to Bernard, who comes in slowly, peering into the shadows, in a tense whisper*)

Where have you . . . ?

BERNARD

I dragged him away from the banisters . . . He was too heavy — to lift.

MARIANNE

The revolver, Bernard?

BERNARD

In Baldwin's room.

MARIANNE

You must get away now — before they come . . . You, too, Ritta. When they find out . . . (*suddenly remembering*) Bernard! *Bernard! — the proclamation!!* — Save yourself! Ritta — get away — go the back way — to the Neefs. Tell them —

BERNARD

Listen . . . !

BERNARD (*hoarsely*)

They're coming!

MARIANNE

Why don't you go — go — *go!*

BERNARD

Go? . . . Where? . . . I'd be stopped. I've no passport.

[*Marianne pushes Ritta toward the door.*

MARIANNE

Follow Ritta . . . The back door . . . Quick! . . . To the Neefs!

BERNARD

No.

MRS. ESTERLINCK'S VOICE (*from a distance, calling faintly*)

Marianne!

MARIANNE

Mother — calling! (*Sound of heavy footsteps approaching*) Put out the candles over there — you're so white . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK'S VOICE (*from a distance, calling again*)

Bernard! Bernard!

MARIANNE

Hide yourself — Bernard — for the love of God . . .

[*Footsteps come nearer. The outer door is heard to open.*

RITTA (*pulling Bernard by the arm*)

Come! Come!

MRS. ESTERLINCK'S VOICE (*stronger than before*)

Marianne! Bernard!

MARIANNE

Go, Bernard!

MRS. ESTERLINCK'S VOICE (*comes nearer*)

Bernard! Bernard!

[*Bernard starts to go to his mother.*

MARIANNE

No, no, save yourself! Go!

BERNARD

She'll come out . . . She'll see . . .

[*As Dr. Esterlinck and General von Wahlhayn emerge from the darkness into the semi-darkness, Ritta runs down the hall, and Marianne hurries up-stairs. Bernard retreats to the farthest corner of the room.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

No light! (*He strikes a match and lights the candle nearest him. To General von Wahlhayn, anxiety and surprise in his tone*)

There is blood on your hand. You are hurt.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I felt a stinging pain in my wrist here — and then — nothing more.

[*Dr. Esterlinck makes a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

This is a bad business. (*Calls*) Bernard! (*No answer. He calls again sharply*) Bernard! (*Bernard comes slowly across the room. He is pale and strangely shaken*) Here — hold that — this way — so. (*He tightens the tourniquet. To the general*) Hold up your arm . . . higher.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*lifting his arm*)

Like this?

DR. ESTERLINCK

The forearm will do.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

So . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

Rest your elbow on your knee . . . Prop it up with your right hand.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It bleeds all right — doesn't it?

DR. ESTERLINCK

One minute now — that will stop. (*To Bernard*) Put your finger so. Now press. Press hard. That's the way. The large vein is cut. Some stitches must be taken. (*Lifts a candle and looks about. Goes into the dining room a moment*) All this confusion and no light . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Can't you find what you need?

DR. ESTERLINCK

In the dark . . . Everything topsy-turvy . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Let it go till morning.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*points to tourniquet*)

Can you stand that all night?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I've stood worse things.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Just the same, in about ten minutes you could have bled to death . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Bad as that?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes . . . When were you hit?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

You heard the shot — when those two men ran by — just as we stood up.

DR. ESTERLINCK

I must have more light. Bernard, can't you get a little more light here?

BERNARD (*in a voice divested of all expression*)

Orders were — no lights.

DR. ESTERLINCK

I had forgotten. Lights are all off. Bring more candles. And call your mother — no, not your mother — call Marianne.

[*Bernard takes his fingers off the tourniquet suddenly. The burgomaster springs forward.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Bernard! . . . Look out!

[*He tightens the tourniquet.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It isn't a pleasant business for him — this helping me.

DR. ESTERLINCK

My son has had a long sickness. He isn't strong yet. Otherwise —

[*The burgomaster checks himself.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Yes, otherwise?

DR. ESTERLINCK

He's crazy to be a soldier.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

You'd like to keep one son.

DR. ESTERLINCK

We are a little country, and if our sons are needed — however hard —

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I had three sons when I was given my command. Two fell before Liège. The other, in the East — at Allenstein. Now — I — have — none.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes, yes, keep your arm up . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I don't know where they're buried. I don't know what happened — at the last . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*setting his teeth. In a low voice*)

A man mustn't let himself think about such things. It takes all the strength away.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I only know one thing — they were all proud to die —

DR. ESTERLINCK (*interrupting. Quietly*)

Turn a little to the left — please . . . My boy was only fourteen.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

If I could give my three boys all over again — I would . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*grimly*)

I have still this one boy.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Yes, I would give all my boys — once more — for the cause.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Your Excellency — every man's country is his cause.

[*The general leans back suddenly.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Are you faint?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It isn't much . . . a little dizzy.

DR. ESTERLINCK

You've lost so much blood. When the candles come — (*Calls*) Bernard! Bernard!

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

How comes it that you are a surgeon?

DR. ESTERLINCK

For four generations one son has been a surgeon. My father was burgomaster before me. *He* was a surgeon too. He sent me to the Sorbonne. This was my father's house — the very furnishings here — And Baldwin, my boy — that's — (*His voice breaks off*) he was to go to the Sorbonne . . . Perhaps now — Bernard — if he is spared . . .

[*A low shriek is heard and Marianne runs in, pale and breathless.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

What's the matter? What's happened?

MARIANNE

Nothing . . . I — stumbled — that's all — and dropped the candles . . . Bernard — (*Bernard says nothing but stands holding the candles like one dazed*). Here are all the candles we have in the house.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Light them all.

[*Marianne brings a candelabra from the adjoining room, then a platter. She arranges the candles and lights them.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

That's not so bad. Now bring a basin of water . . . and a decent bandage, Marianne.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It's quiet as death here now . . .

[*Bernard starts violently.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Thank God! . . . then somebody can sleep . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

My Chief of Staff can sleep, I tell you . . . He sleeps like a dead man.

[*Bernard is seen to be on the verge of collapse.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

You'll have to get some rest now with that.

[*Points to general's wrist.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Yes. I'll see my Chief first: then I'll turn in — at last. Well, let him sleep yet — a little while . . .

[*Marianne suppresses a low cry.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

What is it, Marianne?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

The sight of blood, perhaps . . .

MARIANNE

No. I've grown used to the sight of blood since morning. Father . . . how can Mother sleep . . . how can she sleep — now?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Is she asleep!?

MARIANNE

Yes.

DR. ESTERLINCK

I gave her something to make her sleep. She couldn't go on that way. She'll be better when she wakes up in the morning.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*listening*)

What's that noise?

DR. ESTERLINCK (*listening closely*)

Up toward the Square. It's nothing. Now — it's stopping . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

In the trenches they drop down and sleep — sleep — shells flying right over their heads — sleep like dead men.

[*Bernard and Marianne are tense and moveless.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Now — that will hold nicely till morning. Then I'll sew you up. Be careful not to let that bandage slip.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*to Marianne*)

You ought to be a nurse.

MARIANNE

I want to be a nurse.

DR. ESTERLINCK

She's got one soldier to look after.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It gives me great pleasure to be cared for —

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes, yes, you, too, General . . . But she's got one soldier to take care of for the rest of her life.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

The young lady is betrothed to a soldier?

DR. ESTERLINCK

That's it, your Excellency.

MARIANNE (*proudly*)

He's captain of his company.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*under his breath*)

They pick off the officers first.

MARIANNE

What do you say, Father?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Marianne — you go and call Ritta.

MARIANNE

Oh, Father, poor Ritta's tired — on the go all day long. Half the town's been here for something to eat. Poor things! It's little enough we could give them . . . But it keeps them from starving.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Then, Marianne, you must go into the kitchen and get a cup of coffee for the general.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Not at all — so much trouble — and so late.

DR. ESTERLINCK

A cup of coffee will do you good. You are weaker than you think. Marianne!

MARIANNE

Yes, Father, with pleasure.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I thank you very much, my young lady.

MARIANNE

In a few minutes now if the fire is good.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Should we not — perhaps — help you — with that fire?

MARIANNE

No, your Excellency . . . unless — Bernard will come — (*with significant appeal*) Bernard! . . .

[*Bernard, who has withdrawn into the shadow, does not respond. There is silence in the room for half a minute — then Marianne returns.*

MARIANNE (*standing in the dining room door*)

The coffee is still hot. Your orderly — in the yard — has just made himself fresh coffee.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Even that they can do at need — my good fellows.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*warns Marianne with a look*)

I grudge no man food and drink.

MARIANNE

While it lasts, Father, while it lasts.

[*She puts out most of the candles burning on the platter, and lifts the platter to carry it into the dining room.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

That is good German thrift.

MARIANNE

They may be needed to save some other person's life.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

It seems you have really saved my life, then . . .

[*He attempts to rise.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Go slow, your Excellency.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

And I shan't forget that in a hurry.

DR. ESTERLINCK

It's my business to save life.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I have only to look at my wrist.

DR. ESTERLINCK

The mark'll stay by you a good while, I'm afraid.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

At my age, I suppose so.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Pour the coffee, Marianne. (*To the general*) Come, let me help you into the dining room . . . Or would you prefer to drink your coffee here?

BERNARD (*in unconscious, terrified protest*)

Father!

[*At his tone the burgomaster crosses toward him.*

BERNARD (*wildly, in a whisper*)

No, no, no!

MARIANNE

The coffee is poured.

[*Dr. Esterlinck assists General von Wahlhayn to rise.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*standing alone. To Marianne*)

I make you my compliments.

[*General von Wahlhayn walks alone.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

How do you feel now?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

You have made me very comfortable, you and the *gnädiges Fräulein*. I make you both my compliments.

[*The general follows Marianne into the dining room: the burgomaster is about to follow when Bernard stops him with a low half-articulate cry.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*to the general*)

If you will excuse me, your Excellency . . . one minute . . . (*Dr. Esterlinck closes the door gently and*

turns to look after Bernard, who has retreated into the shadow again) Now — Bernard? . . .

[*Both men move slowly into the candlelight.*

BERNARD (*gasps, shuddering*)

Father!

DR. ESTERLINCK (*looks to make sure that the door is closed*)

What is the matter with you?

BERNARD

Father . . . I —

DR. ESTERLINCK

You are white as a sheet.

BERNARD (*in a terrified whisper*)

Up-stairs —

DR. ESTERLINCK

Up-stairs . . . Go on. Why are you trembling so?

BERNARD

S-s-s-h! . . . Up-stairs —

[*He stops and listens fearfully to the sounds in the adjoining room.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Go on. What have you seen?

BERNARD

Up-stairs — near the landing —

DR. ESTERLINCK

What has happened here?

BERNARD

While you were — gone —

[*Conversation between the general and Marianne suddenly ceases. Bernard seems to lose his power of speech.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*sternly*)

Speak! Speak!

BERNARD

There . . . at the head of the stairs . . . He was heavy to drag . . . in the dark.

DR. ESTERLINCK

What are you saying?

BERNARD

If — he — turns around — up there — with a light, — he will see him.

DR. ESTERLINCK

What have you done?

BERNARD

There — on the landing — his Chief of Staff —

DR. ESTERLINCK (*starts in the direction of the hall*)

The Chief of Staff! . . . You — have —

[*Bernard silences his father with an imploring gesture.*

BERNARD

Father — it — had — to — be.

DR. ESTERLINCK (*hoarsely*)

The — general — must — be — told.

BERNARD

It — had — to — be.

DR. ESTERLINCK

It's all over with us.

BERNARD

No, no, not you! — not Mother! . . . not —

DR. ESTERLINCK

All — all of us . . .

BERNARD

All of us — Mother — Marianne . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

All of us.

BERNARD

He can't do it . . . he *can't.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Were you out of your senses . . . or . . . what?

BERNARD

Father, . . . listen . . . I had to shoot him . . . *He was following my sister.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

Here — in my own house — the —

BERNARD

Must we all die? Father, must we all die — Mother . . . Marianne?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Why not? Read the proclamation. It is posted everywhere.

BERNARD

You . . . Mother . . . Marianne . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

I gave him my word.

BERNARD

Father . . . forgive me . . . (*In tones of mortal agony*) Dear Lord Jesus, save my poor mother, save my little sister . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*with stern compassion*)

Be still, Bernard; we must take our medicine like men.

BERNARD

Forgive me, forgive me, Father.

DR. ESTERLINCK

There is nothing to forgive.

BERNARD

Killed you — killed you all . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

You did what you had to do.

BERNARD

To die — all of us . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

The general — must — be — told.

[*The conversation in the dining room stops. The door opens.*

BERNARD

Now . . . now . . . he's coming!

[*Marianne and the general enter.*

DR. ESTERLINCK (*calmly to Marianne*)

Go to your room, Marianne. (*She hesitates and looks from her father to Bernard*) Don't be afraid . . .

MARIANNE

I'm not afraid, Father . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*when Marianne has gone*)

A beautiful young girl!

DR. ESTERLINCK

And good as she is beautiful . . . (*Looking fixedly at Bernard*) And brave as she is good.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

That may well be.

DR. ESTERLINCK

General von Wahlhayn . . . I —

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

And now will you have the goodness to wake up my Chief of Staff?

DR. ESTERLINCK

General . . . I . . . cannot waken him . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

How so? How so?

DR. ESTERLINCK

General, your Chief of Staff . . . has been shot . . .. I —

BERNARD

I — *I* shot him . . . He was following my sister. (*Under his breath*) Dear Lord Jesus . . . save my mother . . . save my sister.

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

Scene is the same as in Acts I and II

MARIANNE

Shot! . . . shot! . . . At dawn . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Was I asleep? . . . oh, yes — now I remember . . . And I dreamed . . . Or — was I asleep?

MARIANNE

Yes, Mother, you were asleep.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Well, then . . . I dreamed — that we were in this room together — you and I — all alone — and it was morning . . .

MARIANNE (*fearfully*)

Do you know what's going to happen in the morning, Mother?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It was morning — and I called your father . . . He didn't come . . . Nor Bernard . . . But Baldwin — (*Her face lights up happily*) Baldwin heard me . . . He answered me . . . *He* came . . .

MARIANNE (*grips her mother's hands*)

Your hands are so cold . . . Mother!

MRS. ESTERLINCK

He has never been away from home so long before . . . He was hungry — was my boy . . . And he wanted his coffee . . I got out his old cup with the hunter on it . . . He always called it a soldier . . .

[*Suddenly she falls silent.*

MARIANNE

Mother... do you think it's going to happen... really?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

And I was so happy when he gave up the notion of being a soldier, and promised Papa to study and go to the Sorbonne . . . I've put his clean clothes on the chair . . . My little Baldwin! . . . home at last! . . . And I got out his cup . . . and then — I woke up — and . . . (*She lookes around her in a dazed way*) He isn't here at all . . . He isn't home at all. . .

MARIANNE

Oh, Mother, it's not true that we're going to be shot at dawn . . . shot! At dawn! Mother! . . . Are we? . . . If there's a God in Heaven, we can't be . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

They don't care for God in Heaven when there's war . . . He was standing right there . . . and then, I woke up . . .

MARIANNE

We'll soon be with Baldwin now.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

When my boys were little, I planned a great future for them . . . Baldwin was all for war —

MARAINNE

The sky's getting lighter . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Always drums and a soldier suit . . . I thought perhaps — some day — he might be a great general . . . Or a Chief of Staff . . . What is it about the Chief of Staff, Marianne . . . ?

MARIANNE (*at the window*)

Paul's fighting for us . . . He won't know . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I planned a great future for my boys. Marianne will make a fine match — the daughter of a surgeon — and the burgomaster — the burgomaster's daughter.

MARIANNE

We'll be shot . . . and Paul won't know . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

I've tried to be a good mother . . . It isn't easy. Boys will be boys. They're good boys, too . . . Why are we waiting here? . . . Father was always fondest of the girl — you, Marianne . . . But proud of the boys! — Great, big, strapping boys!

MARIANNE

It'll soon be all over for us, Mother . . . Poor Father!

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*mechanically*)

Poor Father! . . .

MARIANNE (*putting her arms around her mother*)

We won't be parted . . . we'll all be together . . . at the last.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

At the last . . .

MARIANNE

Mother, why do you look so — Don't you understand? *They're going to shoot us* . . . Father and Bernard and you and me, your poor Marianne . . . And Paul will live and marry some one else . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

No, no, no, not you . . . not Bernard . . . Father and I — together . . . But we must look after the children . . . we must look after them.

MARIANNE

I shall never see Paul again . . . Mother — give me your hand . . . Mother — are you afraid?.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

We must look after our children. We must see that they are safe.

MARIANNE (*lifting the curtain*)

Mother — the stars are all gone — only one left in the sky — 'way over there — in the east — a light is breaking through . . . Mother — are you afraid? . . . Mother — speak to me . . . Mother — is it the dawn?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

It's not going to happen. God won't let such a thing happen.

MARIANNE

What do they care for God, — these generals who order girls shot! Think of Leonie! For hours and hours she stayed in that empty house, telephoning to our people. She was only seventeen. . . But they shot her . . . I'm thinking of her now, Mother . . . I want to think of her. *She* was not afraid. She stood up like a queen, and they shot her through the heart . . . Do they always shoot through the heart, Mother?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Hush, Marianne! They'll hear you and take you away from me . . .

[*A cock crows.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*looks out of the window*)

Old Tip is crowing . . . now it's coming —

MARIANNE (*fearfully, closing her eyes*)

The dawn! . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Why are we not sleeping in our beds like Christians? . . . The house is so still . . . like death . . . Listen! . . . The birds are beginning to sing.

MARIANNE

Mother . . . I can't bear it — never to hear the birds sing in the yard again . . . never to see another day . . . I'll go to the general . . . I'll beg the general to let us live . . . on my knees . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Yes, yes, he mustn't harm Bernard . . . One is enough. They mustn't take Bernard, too.

MARIANNE

What have we done . . . ? Our people are peaceful. We only ask to be let alone. And these strange soldiers come along and drive us into our graves . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Ritta is making the coffee . . . It smells good, doesn't it, Marianne?

MARIANNE

Mother! . . . Look at me . . . Do you forget?

MRS. ESTERLINCK

The clock is running down. I forgot to wind it . . . So much trouble.

[*Mrs. Esterlinck presses her hand to her head.*

MARIANNE

Poor Mother!

[*She kisses her mother.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Call your father, Marianne . . . Bring Papa here . . .

MARIANNE (*rattling the door knob*)

They have locked the door.

MRS. ESTERLINCK

Why have they locked the door?

MARIANNE (*shaking the door*)

Open this door! Open . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*not raising her voice*)

Papa! . . . Bernard! . . . Come!

MAN'S VOICE (*the other side of the door*)

Was gibt's?

MARIANNE

Open that door. (*Wildly*) Open it! Open it!

[*The door is opened suddenly, and Marianne starts out of the room. The guard blocks her way.*

GUARD

It is forbidden.

MARIANNE

I want my father — my brother . . .

GUARD

It is forbidden.

MARIANNE

My mother here — she wants to see them . . . We must see them . . . speak to them . . .

GUARD

It is forbidden.

MARIANNE

My own father! In our own house! (*Trying to push past the guard*) Let me pass . . .

GUARD

It is forbidden.

MARIANNE

Who are you to forbid us — anything — here — in our own house . . . My own brother . . .

MRS. ESTERLINCK

My son . . . my husband — the burgomaster . . .

[*Marianne tries to get through the door.*

MARIANNE (*calls out*)

Father! . . . Bernard!

[*The guard pushes her back again.*

GUARD (*stolidly*)

It is forbidden.

MARIANNE

Why doesn't God strike you dead?

A MAN'S VOICE

Die Damen trinken jetzt Kaffee.

GUARD

Ach, so! (*Takes Marianne and her mother by the arm*) *Die Damen trinken jetzt Kaffee.* The ladies shall now drink their coffee.

[*Marianne tries to free herself from his hold.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK

No, no, Marianne — don't! He might hurt you.

[*The guard half-carries Marianne into the dining room. Mrs. Esterlinck follows passively. A small detachment of German soldiers marches by singing:*

Dr. Esterlinck enters accompanied by General von Wahlhayn. He listens to the words of the song, sets his teeth together, terribly shaken.

DR. ESTERLINCK

God!

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

If it were only myself . . . But my duty, Dr. Esterlinck . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

Do what you must.

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

My honor —

DR. ESTERLINCK

Only — get it over with — quickly!

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

If there is anything — (*Dr. Esterlinck starts as though to speak, stops and closes his eyes a few seconds*) — anything — at all possible — that I can do . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK (*quietly as though to himself*)

Twenty-four hours ago this was a peaceful village; life wasn't such a bad business . . . I had plans . . . Now — my wife — my children . . . (*He is unable to go on for a minute and they stand together in silence.*) Now our people are homeless — the town is choked with blood . . . My youngest lies — (*His voice fails for the second time*) And now — the one boy left me — he, too! . . . My wife! . . . And my girl! Your Excellency — it is horrible . . . Must they — they, too . . . ?

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Dr. Esterlinck, I owe you my life — and if it were mine to give — you should go — unharmed — you and yours; but my life is *not* my own; it is pledged to the honor of the Fatherland; I am general of the Sixteenth Division; the order has been given; the proclamation is posted on your walls; my Chief of Staff has been shot down in this house; there is no way out.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Shoot me. I ask nothing for myself. Shoot me. I am ready . . . And my boy — if you must . . . But my poor wife! . . . My girl! Put yourself in my place; if it were *your* wife, your Excellency — if it were *your* daughter; if you had a daughter like mine . . . Your Excellency — can you find it — in your heart — to have them —

[*He breaks down, groaning.*

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN (*suddenly makes a tremendous decision*)

No, no, Dr. Esterlinck, not your wife and daughter . . . I couldn't . . . No, no! Dr. Esterlinck, your wife and daughter! — they are safe!

DR. ESTERLINCK (*in a horrible revulsion of joy*)

A-h-h! . . . Thank you, General . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

I'll take you in to them . . . You can tell them —

DR. ESTERLINCK

No. No. Don't do that . . . They couldn't stand it . . . Afterward — tell them — why . . . I mustn't make it harder for them . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

Whatever I can do . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

Perhaps it would be better to take them along . . . Who knows how long they'll have a crust to eat — or a roof over their heads . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

The house shan't be harmed. I'll see that they're cared for.

[*Sound of many footsteps approaching.*

DR. ESTERLINCK

They're coming . . .

GENERAL VON WAHLHAYN

They're bringing in your son . . . You'll have something to say to him.

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes. He's so young. He doesn't want to — die. That's natural. All his life I've been getting him ready to live. I must help him now. (*General von Wahlhayn stands at attention and salutes Dr. Esterlinck, resting his heavy helmet against his wounded wrist. As the general passes out*) Be careful of your wound.

[*Guards bring Bernard into the room and withdraw.*

BERNARD

Father — is it — now?

DR. ESTERLINCK

Yes, my son, when I have spoken to you . . . a minute . . .

BERNARD

Will they take us — all together — Mother — Marianne?

DR. ESTERLINCK

No . . . not Mother and Marianne . . . The general — has — promised to look after — them.

BERNARD

I want to see them, Father: I want to say good-by . . .

DR. ESTERLINCK

It won't help, Bernard. You couldn't stand it. The general will tell them — afterward.

BERNARD

Father — if the first fire — should miss?

DR. ESTERLINCK

It won't miss . . . There'll be ten of them.

BERNARD

Will they blindfold us?

DR. ESTERLINCK

They always do.

BERNARD

Father . . . you'll be with me?

DR. ESTERLINCK

I'll be with you — all through.

[*The guard has opened the door. Dr. Esterlinck bows silently and leads Bernard out of the room. Their footsteps die away. Mrs. Esterlinck and Marianne are brought back into the living room.*

MARIANNE (*to the guard*)

Aren't they going to — take — us — soon — now?

GUARD

No.

MARIANNE

Where are they — my father — my brother? When are they coming? (*The guard goes out. There is the sound of the key turning in the lock. Sound outside of feet tramping. Marianne springs up and runs to the window*) Father! Bernard! Mother! They're going to be shot . . . They're going to be shot. (*She falls back as though about to swoon. Rushing wildly back to the window again*) Devils! Devils! You shall not murder them!

[*One volley.*

MARIANNE

Father! . . . Dear Father! . . . Bernard! . . . Brother! (*The mother has become rigid. Gradually she re-*

laxes into a strange passivity. Marianne, beating against the door) Father! . . . Bernard! Can you hear me? (*She falls at her mother's side. Second volley. Marianne raises herself to her knees*) They're gone . . . gone . . . both gone . . .

[*Marianne on her knees moans bitterly and sways from side to side with clasped hands lifted as though in prayer.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*in a strangely calm, unmoved even tone*) I would like to speak to your father a minute, Marianne.

MARIANNE

Mother . . . don't you know? . . . Father's . . . gone . . . (*She tries to stifle her agony*) Father! Bernard! Gone!

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*same tone*)

Marianne, call him. (*Marianne does not move. After a moment's silence*) Bernard will call him . . . Where is Bernard? Why does Bernard stay away so long? (*Her voice sinks*) Perhaps they have found Baldwin . . . They are bringing Baldwin home. Let us get the bed ready for Baldwin.

MARIANNE

Mother . . . love me . . . Take me in your arms . . . I'm all you've got now . . . your poor Marianne . . . Mother, love me . . . You're the only one to love me.

[*She weeps.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*a little querulous*)

Why are you crying? See! You are spotting my silk gown — my new black silk gown . . . (*Like one stunned, putting her hands to her head*) Is it

Sunday, Marianne? Or why am I wearing my new black silk gown?

MARIANNE

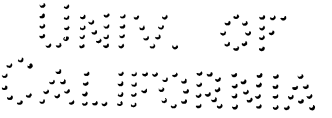
Oh, my God, Mother! . . . Don't you remember? . . . Mother! . . . Mother! (*She lays both her hands on her mother's shoulders*) Don't you remember? (*She shakes her mother*) Don't you remember? . . . They've killed them — Baldwin, Father, and Bernard! (*Wildly, gripping her mother's arm*) You *must* remember . . . You *shall* remember . . . Look at me! . . . Look at me! . . . (*She raises her mother's face and stares into the strangely passive eyes with their set pupils. Then, terrified beyond human endurance*) Mother, speak to me . . . speak!

[*She falls away and shrieks at the unearthly calm of her mother's faint, slow smile.*

MRS. ESTERLINCK (*pats Marianne gently*)

There! . . . There! They'll be home soon now and everything will be all right.

THE END



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